Social Networking Sites and Learning English as a Foreign Language
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1. Introduction

People live in the era of globalization, where is a virtual means of communication vie technologies. Technology has been playing a pivotal role in changing people's lives, particularly in the arena of education. School as well as university students have taken technology as a routine activity in their studies. Studies (for example Ralston 2012) encapsulate technology as a fact of life for daily communication which could influence the language learning. A social media, though keeps the students busy with the social interactions, seems to have paved a way to new phenomenon in language learning, like for example, using abbreviations, emoticons, instant messaging etc., which may affect the formal English, which they are expected to use in their academic career. Warschauer (2007) raised a serious concern about the students' social networking interactions, if they are damaging or useful to the teaching of reading and writing. Guy (2012) favored the notion that accessing the social networking sites impacts the university students' reading and writing skills positively.

The paper focuses on the possibility of using the social media network as a platform for English teaching-learning process so that the students, in an essay manner, enhance not only their reading skills, but also their writing skills as well.

2. Social Networking Sites, and their Positive Impact in an EFL Environment

The notion of using social networking sites (SNSs) as means of teaching-learning English language is controversial, as there are studies that are in favor or against the notion. The argument is presented below in the following manner.

Studies such as Richardson (2010) and Wu and Hsu (2011) pinpoint the benefits of social networking sites in many ways. In the first place, it creates a friendly and fun environment for language teaching, where students may practice their English language skills while entertaining themselves. Secondly, there is a decline of the students' stress levels and an invitation for further engagement and involvement in the site. For instance, a study conducted by Yunus and Saleh (2011) shows that English students in Malaysia favored the integration of the SNSs into EFL writing class because they were able to express their thoughts and feelings without any mounting pressure with their peers. In similar vein, White (2009) carried out a study about the role of SNSs in improving their English language skills, and found out that the students in Japan had a chance to interaction with their teachers and peers, though none of the studies above stipulated if this SNSs interaction affected the students' academic reading and writing skills in a classroom situation.

The other benefit of SNSs is that students may build up their confidence in interacting with their friends, as both have equal role or none of them corrects the other when mistakes happen, according to White (2009), which paved a way for less proficient students to have comfort to take part in on-line discussions in an appropriate way.

Furthermore, White's study (2009) reported that, SNS lay favorable atmosphere for the students to exert all the necessary efforts to improve their academic writing by checking the difficult words, posted by their peers, in a dictionary and by using words more carefully when posting comments because they knew someone was reading through them.

Lastly, SNSs are advantaged in enhancing the critical thinking of the university students, according to (Yonus and Saleh 2012), in which the activities helped them to generate ideas before writing up and completing their writings. Moreover, students' knowledge was broadened

by getting engaged into academically oriented interactions, where they accessed various piece of information from different disciplines (Pempek et al. 2009)

In the sphere of reading and writing, SNSs interaction seems to be helpful in many respects. Yunus et al (2012) argue that SNSs provide a fertile ground for students to practice their reading and writing kills. For example, a study conducted by Shih (2011) shows that in a writing class, the students were able to improve their grammar, sentence structure, content and lexis by doing activities on face book. Also, in a similar study by Kabilan et al. (2010), the learners learned new ways of organizing ideas and writing structures while interacting with their friends on SNSs. Thus, as White (2009) suggests that by organizing a peer discussion on SNSs, the learners may get an opportunity of minimizing their mistakes, and generating ideas for their writing in an on line interaction.

Moreover, Shih (2011) assessed the 'blended learning approach' which involves SNSs as learning tool and reported that the learners were beneficial of reading and writing skills by reading their peer's paragraphs and compositions, and were able to develop their lexical skills from the readings of the comments by their peers by looking them up in a dictionary. According to Yunus et al (2012), by accessing to SNSs, the learners could easily correct their spelling mistakes by using the spell-check feature and asking their peers on line for the correct spelling of the words they used.

3. Social Networking Sites and their Side Effect in an EFL Environment

Several studies (White 2009), argue that SNSs interaction may affect the learners' English language skills, particularly the writing skills negatively. Wu et al. (2011) reported that students may be frustrated when their writings are posted on the SNSs walls because they do not want others to pinpoint their weakness, which makes them feel inferior. The other disadvantage of SNSs as a learning platform is distraction; naturally learners may not focus on the educational part, as a bunch of activities are carried out on the sites, which could shift their attention away and keep them busy for a great deal of time.

In writing skills, in particular, Shih (2011) argues that SNSs may not be appropriate for the formal writing practice, as no direct correction is given by the teacher, and hence they may continue their writings with wrong spellings and inappropriate words. Furthermore, Hooley (2009) reported the belief of the undergraduate university students about the use of SNSs as a platform for academic writing practice, and expressed their negative attitude towards it. They believe that it cannot work for academic or formal purposes. Moreover, Gonzalez (2003) disfavored SNSs for academic writing practice, arguing that it negatively impacts the students' way of using English language, specifically in the areas of grammar, organization and spelling; the students may tend to use incomplete sentences and short phrases in SNSs interaction, which results in producing informal conversation, rather than formal writing. She further argues that there is a huge distinction between informal writing in SNSs interaction and academic wiring, and the students may not pay attention to the distinction.

In addition, Selwyn (2009) asserted that learners may develop a habit of using short forms, acronyms and abbreviations, which may affect the students' academic learning experience negatively, and may apply this habit when doing their academic writing. Thus, SNSs do not help the learners to improve their academic writing; instead they develop an informal writing style.

The inappropriate features applied in SNSs interactions, but not in academic writing are given below:

➢ Capitalization use: all capitals for 'shouting' such as "I SAID NO," asterisks for emphasis such as "the *real* answer".

➢ Emoticons or smiles use for conveying a feeling are such as facing a hard situation -_-!, being happy :) or :-) , being sad : (or :- (.

➢ Multiple punctuation marks or letters use for a prosodic affect are such as no more!!!!!, Yes!!!!!!,aaaaahhhhh, soooo.

➢ Special abbreviations or acronyms used for saving time and making it convenient, such as b4/B4 (before), lol/LOL (laughing out loud), oic/OIC (Oh I see)

➢ Phonetic spelling use for transcription of standard pronunciations are such as "nite" for "night", "guyz" for "guys", "luv" for "love", "wanna" for want to,

➢ And there are so many acronyms crossed over into social media from texting or from online shorthand used in forums. Some of them have been bandied around the Internet for years, but others are more modern inventions. They seem to be found in the public posts made and shared by followers or in the user' comments on the social content. Some of them also get turned into popular hash tags that individuals and brands alike can take advantage of: These acronyms and abbreviations are given below:

AFAIK: Stands for "as far as I know."

AMA: Stands for "ask me anything." Often used to signal an open question and answer opportunity on a social channel.

BAE: This abbreviation means "before anyone else," and is one of the more recent creations. Typically it refers to a person's significant other, but could be a very close friend as well.

BFF: A throwback to childhood in the 80's and 90's, this still stands for "best friends forever."

BRB: "Be right back." This comes up most often in the context of real-time messaging or chat services.

BTW: Stands for "by the way."

FBO: Stands for "Face book official." This most often refers to making a public announcement of a life development, such as a new job or new relationship, on Face book to your entire social audience.

FF: The "follow Friday" trend began as a Twitter hash tag for recommending people who merit attention on social. These days, most users don't make this a weekly update, but save it for giving a signal boost to especially interesting or important social profiles.

FOMO: Stands for "fear of missing out."

FTW: This acronym of "for the win" initiated in the gaming world, but has become a cry of victory or success for all.

FYI: "For your information." Another classic that is still in frequent rotation

GTG: "Got to go" can end a conversation.

ICYMI: "In case you missed it" most frequently is used when sharing content that is not current. That could be a news item from a few days prior or an evergreen blog post that you want to return to circulation.

IDC: Stands for "I don't care."

IDK: Stands for "I don't know."

ILY: Stands for "I love you."

IMHO: This acronym means "in my humble opinion."

IMO: A slightly different take, this means simply "in my opinion."

IRL: This acronym means "in real life," and is meant to distinguish between people's online and offline lives.

JK: This phrase is "just kidding," and can be helpful in conveying a light-hearted tone when there's a possibility for a statement to be misconstrued.

LMAO: Stands for "laughing my ass off." Not always the right phrase for a business context, but makes it just as necessary to know this acronym when you see it.

LMK: Stands for "let me know."

LOL: A well-used phrase from the beginning of online chat culture, this means "laughing out loud."

NBD: Stands for "no big deal."

NM: Stands for "not much."

NVM: Stands for "never mind."

NSFW: The label "not safe for work" usually designates material that is violent, sexual or otherwise inappropriate for a professional setting.

OH: Stands for "overheard." Generally used as context for quotes.

OMG: Stands for "oh my god" or "Oh my Gosh."

OMW: Stands for "on my way."

PODT: Commonly used as a hash tag on image-centric networks, this stands for "photo of the day."

PPL: This is shorthand for "people."

QOTD: Another frequent hash tag, this one means "quote of the day."

ROFL: A close relative of LOL and LMAO, this acronym is "rolling on the floor laughing."

SMH: This stands for "shaking my head" and is most frequently used to express shock or dismay.

TBH: Stands for "to be honest."

TBT: If you're sharing an old photo, you'll most likely want to use the hash tag for "throwback Thursday." Just make sure you post on the right day of the week!

TIL: Stands for "today I learned."

TL; DR: This unusual acronym means "too long; didn't read."

WTF: Another salty shorthand, this stands for "what the f***."

YOLO: The phrase originated in a song by rapper Drake, but the acronym of "you only live once" has also caught on in social communication.

4. Conclusion

The author believes that though the social networking sites, particular the face book has a negative aspect, there appears to be an opportunity to turn it into a means of learning English language in a relaxed way. In the first place, lots of students participant on the social networking sites, and hence they share important and useful linguistic ideas and information, which may pave a way to for the students to improve their reading skills. Secondly, the students have an opportunity to practice their writing skills. However, this should be monitored, and the students should be instructed to write full sentences and avoid using acronyms and abbreviations. Under such circumstances, the students could get conducive environment to write academic paragraphs and essays, and access abundant sample academic writings as they are connected to the internet. On top of that, this connection enables students to do pair work, and check each other's writing, which develops an independent learning by the students, the ultimate goal of education. Eventually, and above all, the use of social networking sites may motivate students not only to do reading, writing but also some kind of research to generate ideas and develop their argument skills.

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